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NOTES ON *THE OWL AND THE NIGHTINGALE*

In the following notes W refers to J. E. Wells, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Boston and London, 1907, a parallel print of the Cotton (C) and Jesus College (J) MSS., with introduction, notes, and glossary; G refers to Wilhelm Gadow, *Das mittlenglische Streitgedicht Eule und Nachtigal*, Berlin, 1909, a critical text with introduction, glossary, and brief notes; B refers to Dr. W. Breier, *Eule und Nachtigal, Eine Untersuchung der Überlieferung und der Sprache, der örtlichen und der zeitlichen Entstehung des me. Gedichts*, Halle a. S., 1910.

The text quoted in these notes is that of the Cotton MS. as printed by Wells, except when J is indicated. I have, however, omitted all punctuation and the capitalization of the MS., which is only partly reproduced by Wells.

Verses 13-14.—

þe niȝtingale bi-gon þe speche (J þo speke)
in one hurne of one breche (J beche)

Mätzner (*Altenglische Sprachproben, Wörterbuch*) hesitatingly interprets *breche* as 'Brache'. He is followed by G in text and glossary, who notes that OE *bræce*, 'Brache, Brachfeld', is cited by H. Middendorf. Stratmann suggests that J *beche* may be right, and refers it to ME *bache*, *bæche*, 'valley'. B (p. 73) notes: "Die Lesart von C würde vocalische Reimreinheit ergeben, vgl. N. E. Dict. unter *break*." But the only appropriate word in the Oxford Dictionary (NED) seems to be a variant of *brake*, 'bushes', which is not recorded before 1440. B says further, "Für die Interpretation ist J vorzuziehen, vgl. N. E. Dict. unter *bache*, es wäre dann [e]: [æ] zu lesen." B's suggestion that the J scribe wrote *speke* (inf.) because he mistook *þo* as adverb appears reasonable, and the reading *speche: beche* is justifiable from the texts.

Not only is the rime bad if we read *beche*, 'valley', but this meaning does not fit here. Verse 1, "I was in a summer dale", has already given the general location, and to add, "The nightingale began the debate in a corner of a valley" would for this poet be strangely superfluous. The fact is,

we need a very definite location here, in accordance with the accurately descriptive habits of the poet.

The fewest difficulties with satisfactory sense seem to me to arise if we read *bēche*, 'beech tree': "The nightingale began the debate in a corner (an angle, crotch, or merely, one side) of a beech, and sat upon a fair branch, around which there were many blossoms in a thick waste hedge mingled with tall grass and green sedge." Apparently the branch she was actually sitting on was not in bloom, for in 1636 she hopped upon one of the *blossomed* branches which were round about her first position. Observe, too, that the other two birds sharing in the action are definitely located: the owl is in an 'old stock' (25), her proper ivy-mantled tower, and the wren is in a linden (1750).

The rime of *speche* (WS *ǣ*, Angl. *ē*) with *beche* (OE *ē*) finds in O&N at least three parallels, according to B (p. 73, Anm. 2); viz., 988, 1041, 1413, and possibly 225. In *forleten: wepen* 988 and *sed: bled* 1041 the vowels are of identical origin with those of our passage as explained.

29-31.—

þe niȝtingale hi iseȝ
& hi bihold & ouer-seȝ
& þuȝte wel wl (J ful) of þare hule

B remarks under the section on the adverb (§41), "*-e* ist elidiert in *wl* C, *ful* J 31 und *lihtlich* 1185." W and G properly explain *lihtlich* as adjective. W explains *ful* as adverb, and G as adjective, accusative case. G, however, refers *þuȝte* to *þinche*, which is inconsistent with *ful* as acc. adj. W refers it to *þenche*. B says (p. 138), "Ae. *þenc(e)an* und *þync(e)an* sind in beiden Hss. gesondert; nur in V. 31 hat sowohl C als auch J *þuȝte*, bezw. *þuhte* statt *þoȝte* bezw. *þohte*. Die gemeinsame Vorlage hatte hier bereits das Versehen." But the assumption of this single exception is unnecessary, for the idiom is good with *ful* as adjective, nom. case, and *þuȝte* in its proper sense: "It seemed to her foul regarding the owl,—she thought foul of the owl", in which, however, the word *thought*, though personal in construction, preserves the meaning (not now usually recognized as distinct) of OE *þyncan*: 'received an impression about', not 'reflected about'.

The passage beginning with verse 29 is an instance of the impersonal verb joined with a sentence containing a nominative and a personal verb. Van der Gaaf has shown¹ that the joining of a personal with an impersonal verb without personal dative or accusative expressed occurs in the case of the verb *pyncan* at a period before we are justified in calling *pyncan* personal. He cites an example from the Blickling Homilies. In 31, therefore, if the pronoun were expressed, the sentence would read,

Hire þuȝte wel wl of þare hule.

This having been referred to the usual impersonal construction, there is in this passage another element that requires attention. This sentence also illustrates what I believe to be an additional cause² to those named by Van der Gaaf for the change from the impersonal to the personal construction. Originally, in the impersonal construction the personal object of the verb is conceived of as being acted upon; but this personal object occupies in the thought as a whole the logical place of the personal subject in personal sentences. It may be said, for example, that in such an impersonal sentence as *Me þin modsefa licað* the main idea is represented as an impression coming from an external object or fact back toward the person concerned,—toward the speaker when the pronoun, as here, is in the first person. Our present method of representing the idea is as a judgment or mental act proceeding forward from the person to the fact or object: 'I like your character'. This latter is, of course, the normal situation for the great majority of English sentences. In those instances of OE impersonal sentences in which the grammatical subject of the verb was formally distinguishable as nominative, the feeling for the original "backward" mode of conceiving the idea doubtless remained much longer than in those instances (of strong masculine nouns, for example), where it was not thus distinguishable. There are several in-

¹ *The Transition from the Impersonal to the Personal Construction in Middle English*, Heidelberg, 1904, § 39.

² Or perhaps only an indication of the change in the manner of conceiving the idea, not yet wholly expressed formally.

dications even in OE that impersonal sentences had for the speaker the feeling of what may be called a "forward looking" construction. For instead of nouns or pronouns that might occupy the place of grammatical subject of the impersonal verb, there are found expressions, such as prepositional phrases, in a corresponding position with reference to the verb that show the conception of a mental act *proceeding toward* an external object,—such phrases as cannot be substituted for a *subject* of the impersonal, but could be substituted for an *object* of the verb changed to the corresponding personal meaning.³ For example, compare *Langað þe awuht, Adam?* (Gen. 496) with *Ðæt us nu æfter swelcum longian mæge* (Oros. 84/27).⁴ Note also the following:

Ða ongan hine eft langian *on his cyððe* (Bl. Hom. 113/15).

Such constructions are frequent in Middle English:

i praie, on me þe rewe (Bev. of Hamt. 3658).

þar-after me longez sore (S. S. Leg. 186/40).

after þe us þinket long (Ass. of Oure Ladye 130 C).

selcouthe o þam thought me (Curs. Mund. 4568 C).

Eue þouȝte here of ful fair (ibid. 1211 T).

O þis bodword thought him ful god (ibid. 8556 C).

The following are from *The Owl and the Nightingale*:

þe were i-cundur (J i-cundere) *to one frogge* (85).

Ov nas neuer i-cunde þar-to (114).

ne lust him nu to none un-rede (212).

vor me is lof to Cristes huse (609).

hom longeþ honne noþeles (881).

þat him eft þar-to noȝt ne longeþ (1486).⁵

³ I believe, as I hope in the near future to show, that this relation of ideas also underlies the use of the prepositional infinitive, and perhaps also the simple infinitive, which are commonly spoken of as "subject" of impersonal verbs.

⁴ For several of these examples I am indebted to Van der Gaaf's collections. Cf. W. S. Gospel of John, 10:13, 12:6.

⁵ I think it probable that 85 is to be explained as an impersonal "forward looking" construction: 'It were more natural to thee for a frog'; i. e., in our idiom, 'Thou wert better adapted to a frog'. An exact parallel to this would then be 114 quoted above, where *ov* is in dative construction with *icunde*, and *þar-to* follows as a complement to the sense of the whole clause. (W and G follow Mätzner (Wb) in calling *icunde* here a noun. It can just as well be an adjective. Under the adjective Mätzner quotes La. II. 551, 'hit neore him noht icunde').

147-148.—

for ho wel wiste & was i-war
 þat ho song hire abisemar (J a bysemar)

B (p. 93) follows W in making *bisemar* a dative after *a*, preposition, the only instance mentioned by B of a dative without *-e* in rime. G follows W's alternative suggestion making *bisemar* accusative. Cf. 1311 where the dative *-e* is written in spite of the length of the word and the fact that it is not needed for the meter. For *a*, acc. sg. of *ān* with masculines and neuters, cf. 45, 94.

180.—

mid faire worde & mid ysome (J some)

B (p. 97) and G interpret *ysome* as a noun, but give no reason for disagreeing with W's explanation of it as an adjective. The OE adjective is *gesōm*, while the noun is *sōm*. The meter shows that C *ysome* is better than J *some*, and the sense is excellent as an adjective modifying *worde*. The adjective occurs also at 1522 and 1735. It may be noted that we have here an idiomatic order of words for native English; e. g., in Ohthere's Voyage (Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, p. 41. 6) we find, *Hi habbað swyðe lytle scypa and swyðe leohte*. 355-357.—

an eurich mure;þe mai a-gon
 gif me hit halt eure forþ in on
 bute one þat is Godes riche

But possibly we are to take *þe* in 85 not as the second personal pronoun, but as the relative, as in CJ 1383, C 1386, and interpret, "Thou wouldst crush me with thy claws, which would be more suitable for a frog." W's explanation of *frogge* as nominative, taking *to* with *þe*, destroys the rhythm, and G's explanation of *þe* as dative and *i-cundur* as nominative plural is unintelligible to me.

Though *ful* in 31 is not necessarily an adverb, it may be, if with B we assume elision. Adjectives, adverbs, and nouns are found in a similar construction, with the difference that when a noun is used, it becomes the grammatical subject of the impersonal. Compare O&N 31 and other examples having adjectives with the following:

Of al him þhyte hit ille (Alexius, Vern. MS. 246).

Cf. also such questions as O&N 46:

Hu þincþe nu bi mine songe?

In the last it is to be noted that either an adjective or an adverb fits the answer.

B (p. 116) records C *one*, J *on*, as nominative feminine. W and G both read CJ *one*. But is this nominative? Its form is suspiciously exceptional, and it can be dative after *bute* used as a preposition. NED shows no instance of the nominative in affirmative sentences of this kind before 1460. As to gender, it may be feminine, as in 14, 109, 319, or neuter like *hit* in 356.

523-531.—

- 523 ac wane niȝtes cumeþ longe
 & bringeþ forstes starke an stronge
 525 þanne erest hit is isene
 war is þe snelle war is þe kene
 527 at þan harde me mai auinde
 wo geþ forþ wo liþ bi-hinde
 529 me mai i-son at þare node
 wan me shal harde wike bode
 531 þanne ich am snel & pleie & singe

W glosses *harde* as sb., = 'severe season' and *at þare neode*, 'at that time of need'. On J *beode* (530) he notes, "J *beode* leads to derive *bode* from O. E. *bēodan*, 'to command, announce, threaten': But J normalizes *o* to *eo*, and the word may be from O. E. *bodian*, 'to foretell, bode'." But there are no parallels in O&N for such a rime as *nēode*: *bōde*. Neither W, G, nor B give any interpretation of 530, but W's note indicates that he would translate (*h*)*wan* as adverb 'when'. This is at first blush plausible on account of *þanne* 531. With this interpretation neither *beode* nor *bōde* gives very satisfactory sense. I believe *hwan* here is the dative of the interrogative *hwo* as in 1509,⁶ for it makes much better sense than 'when'.

In this view note the poet's usual coherent arrangement of ideas:

⁶ G cites 453, 716, 1621, 1633 as datives of *hwo*. Although OE *to hwām* does occur (Cf. Wülfing's *Syntax*), yet *to hwan* 716, 1621, 1623, may as well be instrumental, as B regards them, and *for hwan* 453 is almost certainly descended formally from OE *for hwon*. G also cites C 890 *for wan* as dative of *hwo*: but this is clearly the conjunction *for* and the adverb *when*, as J *hwenne* and the conjunction *for* in 892, syntactically parallel with 890, prove.

- (1) "But *when* long nights come
 And bring severe frosts,
Then is it first apparent
 Where is the quick, where is the active one:
 (a) In the hard thing (or season) it can be seen
 Who goes ahead, who lags behind;
 (b) In the time of need it can be seen
 Whom one may lay hard tasks upon;
 (2) *Then* I am ready, and play and sing."

Here *panne* in 525 and in 531 are parallel, and are correlative with *wane* in 523. Then the two clauses containing *wo* and *wan* (527-530) are parallel amplifications of *panne* . . . *kene* (525-526).⁷ This interpretation fully provides for the usual meaning of *b(e)ode* 530, which is unsatisfactory otherwise. Moreover, J's usual forms for 'when' are *hwenne*, *hwanne*, or *hwen*, even where C frequently has (*h*)*wan*. In J, *hwan* adv. occurs only once (809), for *hwan* 670 is probably the dative of *hwo* used as a relative: 'He must proceed altogether with strategem whose heart is divided against itself.' This relative clause characterizes *He mot gon*, etc. as a general statement, just as *pe man*, 'that man', does the next.⁸

⁷ *Panne* 531 may be correlative to 527 and 529 (as W seems to interpret), but that does not affect my interpretation of *hwan*, for 527 and 529 may still be in parallel construction (as against what is implied by W's and G's punctuation). For another passage in which similar care is given to parallel structure, there also enhanced by the meter, cf. 421-424 with 425-429.

⁸ In C 670 W reads *pan* with note, "wen, no dot." G reads *wan*, noting only J *hwan*. B (p. 128) reads *pan* dative, remarking, "die Korrelation zu *he* sichert die Lesart von C", thus recognizing its relative use (cf. p. 130). But the use of *hwo* as a relative is fully established by Anklam (*Das Englische Relativ im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1908, pp. 62 ff.) for the southern dialect earlier than MS C; so that the syntax here does not help in establishing the reading at 670. Moreover, C *wan* J *hwan* 453 is used as a relative, the antecedent being obviously omitted. This illustrates one of several developments in addition to the one mentioned by Wülfing (I. p. 425) which contributed to the change of interrogative *hwo* into the relative; e. g., "What did you come for" (interrogative)?—"This is what I came for" (relative). From such types as this (probably several) the relative use then spread to uses that cannot be directly inferred from the interrogative use. Compare colloquial "This is how I did it", in which *how* is essentially relative, not interrogative.

585-590.—

585 wane þu cūest to manne hæȝe
 þar þornes boþ & ris i-draȝe
 bi heȝge & bi picke wode
 þar men goþ oft to hore node
 þar-to þu draȝst þar-to þu wnest
 590 an (J &) oþer clene stede þu schunest

B (p. 115) records *an* 590 as a single case of the accusative singular masculine with this spelling. It is far more likely that this is the conjunction *and* as in J and as the sense requires. G and B take *stede* as accusative singular. This makes good sense, but W may be right in making it accusative plural. Under strong masculine nouns B (p. 94) records as *besondere Fälle*, C *walle* (J = *walles*) 767, *wrenche* 813, *bridde* 123, and *utschute* 1468, and referring to W's note on 767,⁹ says, "Allein *wrenche* 813 and *bridde* 123 bezeugen eine bewusste Verwendung des Plurals auf *-e* neben *-es*; *utschute* 1468 dagegen, das im ganzen Sing. *-e* hat, mag im Plural zu der grossen Gruppe getreten sein, die regelrecht *-e* aufweist."

813 reads, þe[ȝ] he kunne so uele wrenche. As W (note on 20) says, doubt exists as to whether *fele* is to be treated as indeclinable neuter with genitive or as adjective. The twelve instances in O&N are all ambiguous,¹⁰ but at any rate the older construction could be used when a rime was needed, so that *wrenche* may be genitive plural.¹¹ *Bridde* 123 is probably dative (OE *geliefan* takes the dative of the person; cf. Wulfing). To *stede* 590 may be applied B's remark on *utschute*, for both are masculine i-stems. C *walle* (J *walles*) is then the only evidence that masculine o-stems in O&N are irregular in the nominative and accusative plural.

763-764.—

oft spet wel a lute liste
 þar muche strengþe sholde miste

⁹ "C *walle* and CJ *bridde* 123 show confusion of dat. and acc."

¹⁰ In 797, an þe on can swenges suþe fele, *swenges* was probably felt as object of *can*, and *fele* added as an appositive: 'knows thrusts, very many.' Or it may even be genitive plural; cf. B p. 94 f., 1, b), Nom., Acc., and p. 95, bottom.

¹¹ *Fele* with the genitive is illustrated in NED for 1300 (*O. E. Misc.*).

The various attempts to explain this are mostly unsatisfactory (see W's and G's notes). With some hesitation I offer another, which makes sense and is grammatically possible. *Liste* 763 may be genitive (W, G), or it may be nominative (B). This is one of the feminine nouns that had no final *e* in the OE nominative. There are in O&N traces of these nouns with no *-e* in the nominative; B cites *bled* 1042, *blis* 1280, *hen* 430 (and usually); to these add *neod* 466. Now the final *e* on *liste:miste* may be scribal, and *mist(e)* the past participial of *missen* (cf. *miste* for *mist* 3rd sing. J 825). Compare *hadde* (auxil.): *iladde* (pp.) 397-398, 1293-1294. Here it is possible to regard the *-e* on *iladde* as scribal, and *hadde* as one of the frequently used forms that early lost its *-e* in some instances, as it did often by Chaucer's time; or if *iladde* has a pronounced *-e* here, then we are equally justified in regarding *miste* as a participle in spite of its *-e*.¹²

If we may regard *miste* as pp. here, then we may have one of the not infrequent instances in which unstressed *have* is phonetically reduced, and here absorbed in the *-e* of *sholde*, so that *sholde miste* = *sholde have mist*. Observe that this seems to be the exact sense required, the preterite infinitive denoting unreality: 'would have been certain to fail.'¹³

775-776.—

hit berþ on rugge grete semes
an draþ bi-uore grete temes

For C *bi-uore* J reads *bi sweore*. Mätzner's note¹⁴ recognizes *bi-uore* as a preposition, but he adds, "Auffallend aber ist

¹² G (p. 72) cites *iladde* as an inflected pp. along with *ofdradde* (J *at-dradde*) 1143, *bi-hedde* 1048, *imeinde* 823. But *ofdradde* and *bi-hedde* are used as adjectives in the plural, and *imeinde* as an attributive adjective with weak inflection,—usages that lasted till Chaucer: cf. Troil. I. 463, III. 233, V. 1760; and *The bentë mone*, III. 624. In *Anglia* XXXIII (1910) Wells says in an article on the accidence of O&N (under the preterite participle) "Final *-e* occurs in *acwalde* (perhaps for Pl.), *iladde* (prob. for rhyme), and *imeinde* (prob. for metre). All other traces of inflection are lost." It is true that *acwalde* 1370 is here used as a participle, but its use with *beoþ* is so closely analogous to that of an adjective that its plural inflection is not surprising.

¹³ For J *solde* = *sholde* cf. CJ 975.

¹⁴ *Sprachproben*, I. i. p. 42.

der Gebrauch von *temes*, da *teme*, ags. *geteáma*, *getýma*, *jugum*, von dem Gespann, nicht von dem Fuhrwerke oder Pfluge gebraucht wird, wie es hier metonymisch, gleich *jugum* SILIUS 7, 683, zu stehen scheint." W explains the C reading as 'draws in front of' and that of J, 'draws by the neck.' G glosses *temes* as 'Gespann'. The J reading requires a sense of *temes* similar to that suggested by Mätzner. Such a meaning might do for twentieth century New England, but hardly for O&N. NED records the J reading (with that of C as variant, thus approving the later text,) under the meaning, 'a set of draught animals'. Under *team*, IV. 9, is given the meaning, 'part of the gear by which oxen or horses were harnessed to a plough, harrow, or wain. In modern dialect use, a chain to which oxen are yoked in lieu of a pole.' *J bi sweore* would seem to fit this sense better than the other. The earliest quotation is 1350.¹⁵

I believe a proper idea of the sort of mediæval team referred to will show that the C reading is the only right one. The team was composed of horses hitched, not abreast but tandem. The lead horse is proverbially and naturally looked upon as holding the most important place in the team. Hence the statement, "he draws before great teams", implies the special burden of his position,—the point needed here for contrast. A picture from the Louterell Psalter reproduced in Coulton's *Chaucer and his England*, which Jusserand attributes to the first half of the fourteenth century, clearly illustrates our passage. Here five horses are hitched one ahead of another to a four-wheeled traveling carriage. A rider with an extremely long whip sits on the hind horse, and a second with a short whip rides the horse back of the leader.

¹⁵ Under the meaning, 'two or more beasts, or a single beast, along with the vehicle', NED gives quotations from 1641 and 1675, in which, however, this meaning is not necessary, as *team* may refer to the beasts alone, the presence of a vehicle being only inferred, as in "He has the grey team hauling wood."

A pair of long traces reach from the carriage to the leader, the other horses being hitched between them.¹⁶

809-834.—

- oft wan hundes foxes driueþ
 810 þe kat ful wel him sulue liueþ
 þej he ne kunne wrench bute anne
 þe fox so godne ne can nanne
 þej he kunne so uele wrenche
 þat he wenþ eche hunde at-prenche
 815 vor he can paþes rihte & woþe
 an he kan hongy bi þe boþe
 an so for-lost þe hund his fore
 an turnþ aȝen eft to þan more
 þe uox kan crope bi þe heie
 820 an turne ut from his forme weie
 an eft sone kume þar-to
 þonne is þe hundes smel for-do
 he not þurȝ þe imeinde smak
 weþer he shal auorþ þe abak
 825 jif þe uox mist of al þis dwole
 at þan ende he cropþ to hole
 ac naþeles mid alle his wrenche
 ne kan he hine so bi-þenche
 þej he bo ȝep an suþe snel
 830 þat he ne lost his rede uel
 þe cat ne kan wrench bute anne
 noþer bi dune ne bi uenne
 bute he kan climbe suþe wel
 þar-mid he wereþ his greie uel
 835 al so ich segge bi mi solue
 betere is min on þan þine twelue

¹⁶ With this arrangement Chaucer's "Bayard" stanza, Troil. I. 218 ff., completely coincides:

As proude Bayard ginneth for to skippe
 Out of the wey, so priketh him his corn,
 Til he a lash have of the longe whippe,
 Than thenketh he, 'though I prauunce al biforn,
 First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
 Yet am I but an horse, and horses lawe
 I moot endure, and with my feres drawe.'

Note here the *longe whippe*, *al biforn* (cf. the Wife of Bath in A 377), *first in the trays*, *my feres* (plural). Moreover, it would be difficult for any but the lead horse "to skippe out of the wey". Observe, too, how apt is the application to Troilus, at the head of a train of "yonge knights" as he "ladde hem up and down."

W notes, "815-18 probably refer to *kat*, as the return to *uox* in 819 suggests. The fox could hardly be said to 'hang by the boughs,' unless the line mean 'linger by (near) the boughs (trees) [and so be better concealed].'"

Whatever *hongi bi pe boze* may exactly mean, it is easily explicable in general as one of the many well known tricks of the fox (as leaping to a fence, a reclining tree trunk or low limb, etc.) in order to confuse the scent. As to 'hanging around', there can be no question of that here, for that would not disturb the scent.

These verses, moreover, cannot refer to *kat*, for if they did, the cat would have not one 'wrench' but three; namely, following devious paths, hanging by the bough, and climbing a tree, which last is said in 831 ff. to be the cat's one trick. This would leave the fox but two tricks,—doubling on his track (819 is a part of the process), and taking to his hole; thus destroying the ratio which is the point of the illustration.

The "return to *uox*" in 819 is a return, not from the cat, but from the hound of the two preceding verses. Moreover, on the principle of coherence 815-818 must refer to the fox, as is clearly indicated by the close connection of *vor he* with what precedes. The whole passage is a well organized and coherent group: 807-808 state the proposition; 809-814 announce the basis of the contrast in the illustration; 815-826 amplify the fox's tricks, with their failure (827-30); 831-33 state the cat's one trick, with its successful issue (834); 835-36 make the application to the nightingale's one song.

905-906.—

wi nultu singe an oder peode
par hit is muchele more neode

W notes, "of much more need", making *neode* dative in his glossary. G and B record it as nominative, rightly. This is the (mostly obsolete) use of *it* exactly like NE expletive *there*, German *es*: 'There is much more need [of it].' This use with *need* is very frequent in Chaucer, where it is sometimes misunderstood by editors, and is common in NE colloquial (especially illiterate) speech. I frequently hear the expression, "It's no need to do that", in which *to do* is complement to *need*, not subject of the sentence. This use of *it*

is also common in the expression, "It's no use", for which rhetoricians tell us we must use "It is of no use".

939.—B (p. 120) says, "Die Nominativform *h(e)o* ist in den acc. [singular] gedrungen, CJ: 939, 1530, C: 1438 (*he* J, Text verderbt); in O wohl immer *hi*." Another accusative singular *heo* (probably) is found in CJ 1232. But O may have had *heo*, as this is an OE form; cf. Sievers-Cook, § 334, Note 1.

1193.—

ich wat *ȝef* wif luste (J lust) hire make

W and G here explain *wif* as nominative and *make* as dative. It is possible to regard this as the OE construction, *wif* being accusative and *make* genitive. G's suggestion (my own previous conclusion also), however, that the connection requires *l(e)ost* instead of *lust*, is doubtless right, and might have been substantiated by citing the corresponding passage (1159) from the nightingale's speech, of which this passage is virtually a quotation. This would add one case to the three (J 677, 1318, 1657) mentioned by B (p. 14) in which *eo* is represented by *u*, unless this is a mere misreading by the scribe. Cf. also my note on 1229.

1227-1232.—

an grete duntēs beoþ þe lasse
 1228 *ȝef* me i-keþþ mid i-warnesse
 an (J &) fleo schal to-ward mis-ȝenge
 1230 *ȝef* þu i-sihst hu (J hw) fleo of strengē
 for þu miȝt blenche wel & fleo
 1232 *ȝif* þu i-sihst heo to þe teo

G (glossary) has made a plausible addition to the interpretation of this passage by taking *fleo* 1229 as a noun = 'arrow', OE *flā*,¹⁷ and as the subject of *schal*. He makes *fleo* 1230 present optative (W makes it opt. pl.), and by im-

¹⁷ On p. 55 G cites other cases of *eo* writing for OE *a*. Cf. also B p. 17, and p. 14, top. As each scribe was copying from a MS that in different parts had both *o* and *eo* for OE *eo*, it is not surprising that *fleo*, OE *flā*, should be changed to *fleo* in the neighborhood of two occurrences of *fleo*.

B does not mention *fleo*, infinitive or noun, nor does he record *schal* as plural, but his citation of *heo* 1232 as plural implies that *duntēs* is subject of *schal*, as W takes it.

plication follows W's translation (with change to the singular), "if thou seest how [they] fly from the string." But such an ellipsis as "seest how fly from the string" appears to me as impossible in ME as it is in NE. I cannot believe that the poet of O&N would resort to such an unwonted ellipsis when he could just as easily have written *ȝef þu i-sihst heo (hi, hy)*, etc., just as he actually did two verses below. I believe this is what he wrote in 1230. J evidently misunderstood *hu* of his copy and so wrote *hw*. If so, here either is another case of *eo* written *u* (cf. my note on 1193), or *u* here may stand for OE *y* in *hy* (cf. *hure* CJ 1599). If G is right, *heo* 1232 is accusative singular instead of plural.¹⁸

1245-1254.—

- 1245 ich wot & i-seo swiþe brihte
 an summe men kumed (J cumeþ) harm þar rihte
 schal he þat þer-of no-þing not (J he þar he nowiht not)
 hit wite me for ich hit wot
 schal he his mis-hap wite me
- 1250 for ich am wisure þane he
 hwanne ich iseo þat sum wrechede
 is manne neh inoh ich grede
 an bidde inoh þat hi heom schilde
 for to-ward heom is [harm unmilde]

W (glossary) makes *men* accusative plural. G does not cite it, but calls *summe* dative plural. B cites it as one of three cases (885, 910) in which *men* "ist in den dat. pl. eingedrungen." But the context, it seems to me, indicates that it is dative singular. The question is not here one of the owl's merely foreseeing harm come in general to men; but specifically, as she sits on a bough, she sees harm coming 'very clearly, right there', not on men but on 'a certain man'. The specific *he* in 1247-50 shows this. The poet then passes to the

¹⁸ G reads 7 at the beginning of 1229 without note. W reads C *an*. I take this as nominative of the indefinite article *an*, which the sense here appears to require. B records one other instance of nominative *an* (*on*) before a consonant (it is neuter, but gender would not affect the form in the nominative). J or some predecessor took it for *and* (cf. W's notes on 239, 1195, 1371, 1718).

general statement in 1251 ff., there using the dative plural *manne*.¹⁹

1321-1330.—

hwat canstu wrecche þing of storre (J storie)
 bute þat þu bi-haitest hi feorre (J ferre)
 alswo deþ mani dor & man
 þeo of swucche na-wiht ne con
 1325 on ape mai a (J on) boc bi-halde (J biholde)
 an leues wenden & eft folde
 ac he ne con þe bet þar-uore
 of clerkes lore top ne more
 þah þu iseo þe steorre alswa
 1330 nartu þe wisure neauer þe mo

On CJ *bihaitest* W suggests *bihedest* as equivalent by interchange of *d* and *t* and of *ai* and *ē*. He also suggests that we may have here OE *behātan*, 'promise, vow, threaten.' G adopts W's suggestion of *behātan* ("versprechen, geloben, drohen"), deriving (without citing any parallels) from 'geloben' the sense 'verehren' and remarking, "Es sei daran erinnert das man vom Hunde sagt: er betet den Mond an." B (p. 156), after showing that *bihaitest* for *bihedest* is phonetically unwarranted, and suggesting ON *heita*, *heitask*, also adopts W's suggestion of *behātan*.

It is perhaps true that no certain equivalent of *bihaitest* can be produced on strict grammatical grounds; in other words, on the assumption that the scribes of C and J knew what they were about at this point. I therefore resort here to the unscholarly expedient of an emendation. One of two things is sure: either both scribes understood the word and copied it carefully, in which case their enviable knowledge has not been handed down to us; or they copied it faithfully because they did not understand it. Now about as little change as possible is required if we alter *bihaitest* to *bihaldest*. W's footnote ("-it- later obscurely corrected") suggests that some corrector tried the same emendation. *Bihaldest* is ob-

¹⁹ It is true that the usual form for the dative singular in O&N is *manne*. But *men* singular may have been intended in the earlier original, as metrically more suitable than *manne*. For the spelling in the singular cf. J 1164; genitive singular, J 1351, CJ 1154. *Monne* 475, which B cites as dative singular, may be plural. NED gives *men* as dat. sg. down to the 13th century.

viously the meaning required, as W and G both recognize, and as the context demands. Cf. 1321-22 with 1323-26, noting especially *dor & man* and *bihalde*; also 1329-30, noting *i-seo* and *alswa*. Whatever *bihaitest* stands for, it is applicable both to animals and man. This rules out such meanings as 'threaten', 'geloben, verehren'. The obvious point of the ape passage is that he may, like a man, see the writing of a book without any comprehension of its meaning. Just so (*alswa*) the owl may simply sit and behold the stars without understanding their prophetic significance.²⁰

As the emendation assumes a scribal error in the original of C and J, to be noted are the similarity of the letters *i* and *l*; the frequent interchange of *d* and *t* in the poem; cf. C 616, 933, 1175, 1307, 1686, and CJ 1190, 1427. Another circumstance may be noted for whatever it is worth: several instances occur in which a 2 pers. sg. *-est* is written but the *e* is syn-copated, as is shown by the fact that in one of the MSS it is not written; cf. 505, 899, 907, 1399, 1434. Now *bihaldest* thus syncopated would be pronounced *bihaltst*, and might easily be written *bihalttest*, and then misunderstood, because an anomalous form.

1395-1406.—

- 1395 ne beoþ nowt ones alle sunne
for-þan hi beoþ tweire kunne
sum arist of þe flesches luste
an sum of þe gostes custe
þar flesch draheþ men to drunnesse (J drunkenness)
1400 an to wronc-hede (J wlonk-hede) & to gol-nesse
þe gost mis-deþ þurch niþe an onde
& seopþe mid murhþe of monnes honde
an æoneþ (J wunneþ) after more & more
an lutel rehþ of milce & ore
1405 an stijþ on hey þurh modinesse
an ouer-hoheþ þanne lasse

It seems to have escaped notice hitherto that in these verses we have a list of the Seven Deadly Sins, a fact that aids in the interpretation of the passage. The sins are divided according to a medieval classification into fleshly and ghostly

²⁰ Note how suggestively the poet exemplifies the *dor* and the *man* in the comparison of the ape holding the book in imitation of a man.

sins. Those of the flesh are named first: *drunkennesse* 1399 stands for Gluttony, as in *Piers Plowman*, Passus V; omitting *wronchede* for the present, *golnesse* 1400 is for Lechery. Then of the ghostly sins *niþe an onde* 1401 stands for Wrath; *ʒeoneþ*²¹ *after more & more* 1403 is clearly for Avarice, while its opposite, Bounty (*Eleemosyna*), is represented by *an lutel rehþ of milce & ore* 1404; and 1405-1406 express the climax of the ghostly sins, Pride, to be contrasted in 1415-1416 with the chief one of the flesnly sins.

Of the ghostly sins Envy remains. On 1402, *& seopþe mid murhþe of monnes honde*, W suggests *shonde* for *honde*, which B (p. 45) adopts,²² but W's translation does not reveal the bearing of the passage.²³ This is that phase of Envy set forth in *The Romaunt of the Rose* according to which she takes pleasure in men's disgrace.²⁴

²¹ In 1403 C reads *ʒeoneþ*. W, G, and B all emend to *ʒeorneþ*. Why? *ʒeoneþ* makes perfect sense, and is picturesquely vivid as a description of Avarice,—'is always yawning after more'; *ʒeorneþ* makes a flat literalism. *ʒeoneþ* is common in the southern dialect. G objects to the MS reading on the ground that *ʒeoneþ after* does not occur elsewhere. But I believe that has no weight in this instance; *after* was and still is used freely after all sorts of verbs having the sense of 'striving for'; moreover, this is a vividly figurative use, strikingly apt, and characteristic of this poet's style. Such phrases must begin somewhere, and poets cannot be confined to *belege*. Shakespeare's *Ridges hors'd with variable complexions* appears to be a unique instance; but that does not warrant us in emending to *hous'd*, or something equally lifeless.

²² As *monne* or *monnes shonde*. *Monne*, gen. pl., makes better sense in the context and requires no additional *s*; two *s*'s here would have put the scribe on his guard. It is perhaps noteworthy that this verse is the longest of its column in both MSS, and in C contains the only abbreviation of initial *and* in seven out of nine successive verses: *monne* and *shonde* were doubtless crowded together in some previous copy. G gives up the interpretation of this verse.

²³ His alternative suggestion with the reading *honde* is impossible, because it is the sins of the spirit, not those of the flesh, that are here referred to.

²⁴ Cf. *Rom. of the Rose*, 252 ff.:

No-thing may so moch hir plese
As mischef and misaventure;
Or whan she seeth discomfiture
On any worthy man to falle,

Of the fleshly sins Sloth remains to be accounted for. Here two lines of interpretation are possible: the first one assumes that C *wronchede* ("very like *wrone*"—W), J *wlonkhede*, stand in the place of some word in the original meaning Sloth or one of its branches. If, as G interprets, C *wronchede* is the noun (not occurring elsewhere) to the adjective *wrong*, it may represent Sloth in the general sense that Satan finds employment for the idle.²⁵ If neither reading represents the original, some other word meaning Sloth may have stood in the text.²⁶

Leaving conjectures aside, it is possible, in the second place, that the author, not intending to make a complete list of the Sins, omitted Sloth as less distinctly a sin of the flesh. If J *wlonkhede* is the original reading, the poet may have intended to refer among the sins of the flesh to *Luxuria* in its three manifestations, (1) *drunkenness* (as in *Piers Plowman Luxuria* vows to drink water only), (2) *wlonkhede*, meaning the pride of the flesh that leads to *golnesse* (the sense of *wlonk* in 489, its only occurrence), (3) *golnesse*. The point would then be that, whereas (*par*) the flesh leads to one type of sin, the spirit leads to several. Hence the greater detail in treating the latter.

Perhaps the most interesting point of the passage is the poet's fresh treatment of a hackneyed topic, especially his summing up in 1391-1394 and 1413-1416.²⁷

Than lyketh hir ful wel withalle.
 She is ful glad in hir corage,
 If she see any greet linage
 Be brought to nought in shamful wyse.

²⁵ Cf. Wycliffe's Sermon on Sloth (*Select English Works of John Wycliffe*, ed. T. Arnold, III. p. 142): "Ffor þo fende is a theff to wake on mon bothe day and nyȝt; and if he se hym napppe or idel, he temptis hym to monnis harme."

²⁶ In Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, I, 677 ff., *wrawe* and *wrawnesse* are named as results or branches of *Accidia*. Was there such a word as *wrawehede*?

²⁷ Ne schal non mon wumman bi-grede
 an flesches lustes hire up-breide
 swuch he may tellen of golnesse (J heo mahte beo of)
 þat sunegēþ wurse in modinesse (J: C = imodi-nesse)

1451-1454.—

for mi song lutle hwile ilest (J ileste)
 an luue ne deþ noȝt bute rest (J reste)
 on swuch childre & sone a-geþ
 an falþ a-dun þe hote breþ

W records C *ilest* as 3 sg. and C *rest* as infinitive. G adopts J *ileste*: *reste* in his text, citing *reste* as infinitive, but avoiding comment on *ileste* 1451. So far as I have seen B does not note the difficulty. W and G, it will be observed, interpret in the same way, W preferring to regard *rest* as infinitive without *-e* in rime rather than to make *ileste* 3 sg. indicative, as G must.

Another interpretation requires less glaring license of the poet; namely, to read C as it stands with its two indicative forms and *bute* as a conjunction: 'For my song lasteth a short time, and love doth nought but alighteth on such children and quickly departeth, and down falleth the hot breath.' Our modern idiom does not precisely reproduce *doth nought but resteth*, as we use the form *does not but, does but*, + infinitive. There is evidence that both infinitive and indicative were so used in ME. As NED has no collections for the idiom *does not but*,²⁸ I cannot at present furnish early parallels; but they are found in Chaucer and his followers.

E. g.,

B 2121. Thou doost noght elles but *despendest* tyme.

A 2664. what dooth this queene of love

But *wepeth* so . . . ?H. F. III. 546. What did this Eolus but *he**Toke* out hys blake trumpe . . . ?²⁹

The following earlier instances are analogous and their oc-

The last two verses W translates, 'Such a one may abuse for lasciviousness who (*he* *þat*) sins worse in passion (? pride),' thus missing, it seems to me, the chief point of contrast. G treats *swuch* as nominative, and B implies the same (p. 131, g) by correlating it with *þat*. I would translate, 'Such (a woman) he may blame for lasciviousness who himself is a worse sinner in pride,' taking *swuch* as object of *tellen* and as referring back to *wumman*, and *he* as antecedent of *þat*. For the form of *swuch* cf. 1731.

²⁸ Except one or two late instances of its use in the imperative.²⁹ Cf. *Chaucer Soc. Pub.* 2d Series 44 (1909), pp. 146 f. See also NED s. v. *Do*, auxiliary. [*Bestiary* 484-486 is parallel.]

currence would make easy the use of *bute* in the way suggested:

O. E. Hom. (Morris), 165.8. *swo doð þis mannisse flieð fram ivele to werse.*³⁰

Ancr. R. (Morton), 128.24. *ase deð. .sum unseli ancre went into hole of ancre huse.*³⁰

Laz. (NED s. v. *Do*, 25 d). *Aras þer þe to-nome, swa doð a feole wise to-nome ariseð.*

In our passage note also the indicative *a-geþ*, which is in fact more closely parallel with *rest* than with *deþ*: 'does nothing but alight and immediately depart,' *a-geþ* in sense as much depending on *deþ noȝt bute* as does *rest*. This makes unnecessary W's and G's special gloss on *rest(e)* ('rest for a moment'), since the latter part of the idea is expressed by *a-geþ*.

1687-1688.—

ne schal ar hit beo fulliche eue
a wreche feper on ow bi-leaue

In a note on verse 41 G says, "Die Verhandlung findet entsprechend der Natur beider Vögel, die ihre Stimme vorzüglich nachts erschallen lassen, während der Nacht statt und endet am Morgen, denn 'in þare morȝeninge' kommt der Zaunkönig der N. zu Hülfe (1718). Freilich scheint 1687 dazu nicht zu passen."

Not only does 1687 appear to me to fit the time scheme perfectly, but also to exemplify the poet's usual exactness of poetic imagination. He uses as a basis for the dramatic action of the story those external actions of the birds that are natural to them apart from any imaginative interpretation. The approach of morning with the end of the debate is delicately indicated by 1635-36, and 1655 ff., where the other birds (of the day) gather about at the first sign of the dawn and begin to sing. The owl's remark (1687-88) is addressed to these day birds at the very beginning of the day, and so is precisely appropriate,—*eue* referring to the eve of the approaching day. Then the poet imagines the house-wren ("heo nere ibred a wolde") as attracted by the sound of the chorus

³⁰ Quoted by Anklaam, p. 9.

of wood birds and (1717 i.) going to the scene of the contest when morning is more fully come. From this point there is no more debating, but the birds proceed to the judge. The dramatic action could hardly correspond more closely with natural facts.

1757-1758.—

an þurh his muþe & þurh his honde
hit is þe betere in-to Scot-londe

G (§ 70) cites CJ *muþe* as having an unjustifiable *-e* in the accusative singular, mentioning also C 1401 in the same category. In his glossary, however, he cites *muþe* 1757 and *nīþe* 1401 as dative. The latter is probably right. Wülfing (II. p. 512) cites several cases from Aelfric in which *þurh* takes the dative in the sense needed here. In 1757 B (p. 98) makes *honde* dative plural. The sense would seem to be better with the singular here.

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